R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 019 321 UD 003 893

THE NEWARK VICTORIA PLAN, A REPORT TO THE VICTORIA FOUNDATION ON THE STATUS OF THE PLAN.

BY- FRIEDRICHS, ROBERT W. AND OTHERS

PUB DATE JUN 66

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.88 20P.

DESCRIPTORS- *IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS, *PROGRAM EVALUATION, *EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS, *ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS, TEACHER ATTITUDES, RESEARCH PROBLEMS, FIELD TRIPS, ASSEMBLY PROGRAMS, SPECIALISTS, NURSERY SCHOOLS, SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS, INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS, DISCIPLINE, SPECIAL SERVICES, VICTORIA PLAN, NEWARK, NEW JERSEY

THIS EVALUATION IS CONCERNED WITH THE FIRST YEAR OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VICTORIA PLAN IN A NEWARK, N.J., ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. THE COMPONENTS OF THIS IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM WHICH ARE DISCUSSED ARE CLASS TRIPS AND ASSEMBLIES, THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER, THE NURSERY SCHOOL, AND MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES. MOST OF THE EVALUATION IS DEVOTED TO THE PROBLEMS WHICH AROSE IN THE SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM, IN WHICH A FAILURE OF COMMUNICATION AND CONFUSION ABOUT AUTONOMY AND LINES OF AUTHORITY CREATED TENSIONS BETWEEN WORKERS AND ADMINISTRATORS. IT IS FELT THAT THE PLAN HAS BEEN WELL-INTEGRATED INTO THE SCHOOL AND HAS MET WITH FAVORABLE REACTIONS BY TEACHERS. THE TRIPS ARE THE BEST RECEIVED ASPECT ALTHOUGH THE SPECIALISTS AND EXTRA SERVICES ARE CONSIDERED "SATISFACTORY OR BETTER." PRESCHOOL CLASSES ARE "PRODUCING RESULTS" IN LESS THAN A YEAR OF OPERATION, AND THE ADDITIONAL MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES HAVE BEEN VALUABLE. ALTHOUGH THERE HAS BEEN LESS DISCIPLINE SINCE THE PLAN BEGAN, THE PROBLEM DOES NOT SEEM ABNORMAL. IT IS FELT THAT SOME METHOD SHOULD BE WORKED OUT TO REPLACE PERSONNEL WHO LEAVE DURING THE YEAR. (NH)

THE NEWARK VICTORIA PLAN

A Report to the Victoria Foundation
on the Status of the Plan
June, 1966

prepared by:

Dr. Robert W. Friedrichs

Dr. David M. Graybeal

Dr. Philip K. Jensen

of Drew University

Abstract

A final evaluation of this project will be difficult, since the delay in the formulation of a design has limited the types of data and comparisons available. The current report will deal mainly with the implementation of the plan during its first full year. Suggestions on possible research methods to be used in a later evaluation will be covered in a separate report.

A three man team spent over a week in the Cleveland school mostly in interviewing and observation. Preliminary checks on behavioral and academic improvement showed no changes at this time.

Cleveland was a good choice of sites largely because of its prior faculty study in a similar area and its administration, which is open to innovations. Early doubts have faded and the teacher attitude toward the plan is good.

The plan programs have been well integrated into the school.

The class trips have been the most spectacular part of the program and the best received.

The special teachers vary in performance. All are satisfactory or better. Some additional coordination of special and regular teachers seems needed at several points. Remedial reading programs have been generally the most useful.

Pre-kindergarten classes have been imaginatively handled and are producing results in less than one year.

Additional materials and supplies have proved quite valuable particularly in the library. There is some confusion about the availability and delivery of small items to teachers.

The social work program has suffered somewhat from several types of confusion over roles, both of individuals and of social workers generally. Clarification is needed.

Discipline may be looser since the Plan was inaugurated but there is no evidence of an abnormal problem in this area.

Some method should be arranged for the replacement of personnel lost during the year.

Generally the plan is well thought out, staffed, and established. The remaining problem to be explored is whether it works.

Introduction

This evaluation poses several types of problems to the researcher. It is unfortunate that some of them were not taken into account before the project was begun.

1) The project was designed for maximum effect on the students without particular consideration for future applications or generalizations to other schools. As a result several factors operate in a more positive manner than could be hoped for in a general replication of this approach across the Newark school system. Cleveland was selected as the site for the plan largely because of favorable conditions, such as a progressive and willing administration and the previous involvement of its teachers in planning for the similar South Side Project. The personnel brought in to the school are a select sample with more education, experience, and ability. It would be impossible to duplicate this staff at a large number of schools. Any special experimental situation generates motivation which would not be present in a general application of the same ideas. Such motivation often produces positive results under unfavorable conditions.

If Victoria's efforts produce positive changes it would still be somewhat venturesome to use the Plan as a model for a major attack on deprived schools. It may prove more useful to consider the Plan as an upper limit than as a normal case.

2) No arrangements were made to make an evaluation of the separate components involved. The different services interact in special ways with each student producing a situation in which it would be quite difficult to

decide on the relative merits of each type of work. The most reliable conclusions will have to be those which involve the entire program.

3) There is no basis for deciding whether results are due to the Plan or simply to changes in the general social situation, or to the normal improvement in a school system over several years.

Comparisons of the students who will be enrolled in 1968-69 with those of 1963-64, the last pre-plan year, would be limited to largely academic data of the type kept in school records or available from the citywide testing program. They would be further limited by ensuing changes in the nature of the school population, district lines, racial attitudes, changes in educational methods, staff changes, and other similar variables.

On the other hand comparisons with neighboring schools are also confused by several factors. The schools in the area differ in size, level of reading ability, socio-economic variables, and intelligence of the students. Each school changes with time so that the best comparisons may change between 1965 and 1970. Finally, Title I funds from the federal government are becoming available to the comparison schools. These funds are being used to initiate programs which are modeled after some elements of the Victoria Plan. In fact two staff members from Victoria are now Title I project directors at other schools. However, it seems doubtful that the other programs can match the early start, larger investment, and high quality of the Cleveland project in the next few years.

4) The changes envisioned in the Victoria Plan involve quite basic modifications in the attitudes and experiences of the students,

frequently opposing directly the training in the home. Improvement will not be easy to produce. It seems likely that overt modifications large enough to measure will not be apparent in less than a three-to-five year period. The chance of finding changes after only one year of the full program is small.

5) While instruments exist for an evaluation of whatever academic progress occurs, the attitudinal and other behavioral modifications pose a difficult problem. Such formal tests as have been constructed in these areas are not designed for this type of population. The poor reading level and lack of familiarity with standardized tests at even the sixth grade level would be sufficient to invalidate many approaches. Likewise collection of data from the homes is close to impossible on more than a sample basis. In this social class it has been estimated that fifty percent co-operation from the family is the best that can be hoped for. The co-operating families would be a badly-biased group on which to base judgments.

6) The turnover of students at Cleveland is high. About 300 of the 1300 students change during the school year. Only 40% of the students who complete sixth grade entered in kindergarten. The average child spends 4.5 of the possible 7 years in the school. This turnover produces a continuing transfusion of the prevailing negative attitudes toward education, lack of special abilities, and cultural poverty from the surrounding culture. This dilution in every grade level may serve to mask or to slow down otherwise possible improvements.

These six problems and others of a similar nature limit the possibilities for evaluation of the Cleveland project. As a result of the difficulty of coming to unambiguous or detailed conclusions it seems appropriate to make a comparatively modest analysis aimed in two directions: first, a long range design aimed at specifying the methods to be used in evaluating whatever changes occur as a result of prolonged enrollment under the Victoria Plan; second, an analysis of the program and its accomplishments at this point with primary emphasis on the adequacy of its structure and use. The research design will be dealt with in a later report. The remainder of this paper will consist of an assessment of the current situation.

Method

A three-man research team spent over a week at the Cleveland Elementary School. Data collection was largely by confidential interviews and classroom observation. Every member of the teaching staff and administration, both Victoria Plan and Cleveland, was interviewed individually. These discussions in all cases included the strengths and weaknesses of the education offered at Cleveland both before and during the Victoria Plan.

A selection of both Plan and Cleveland teachers were observed in actual teaching situations. In addition the nature of both school and citywide records and testing programs was evaluated for future use.

Preliminary checks were run for changes in such variables as reading, attendance, intelligence, discipline, and academic achievement.

As suggested in point four of the introduction these showed no changes large enough to warrant additional attention at this time.

History of the Plan

Several factors combined to lead to the choice of the Cleveland Elementary School as the site of the project, among them being the suggestion by the Newark School officials that the project be related to the Southside Project and West Kinney Junior High School. Another point was the prior involvement of the Cleveland faculty in a planning project for cultural enrichment and their specification of types of help they wished for their teaching. This was particularly useful in establishing a friendly attitude toward Victoria on the part of the teachers, since any self-created proposal produces more identification and effort than one imposed from outside.

The choice of Cleveland appears to have been a happy one for the possible success of the Plan since Cleveland enjoys strong administrative leadership and has a tradition of innovativeness as a school.

Cleveland is otherwise a fairly typical school in the kind of depressed area which has come to characterize the inner areas of many cities today. As its establishment some seven years ago many of the teachers were assigned to the school who would not otherwise have chosen it. Today only about one-fourth of those teachers are still present; their replacements are younger, less experienced, and less well-trained for this type of work. Nevertheless the present faculty ranges from average to excellent and the generally good morale of the school helps many to do better work than might be expected.

At the administrative level the relationship between the principal, Miss Parker, and the Victoria Plan coordinator, Mrs. Joyner, has been most fortunate. Miss Parker is a strong administrator, accustomed to making decisions and accepting the responsibility for them, highly respected by her teachers, and open to all suggestions, yet not inclined to accept them unless warranted. Mrs. Joyner is a sensitive individual, adaptable to the necessities of a situation yet determined to get the job done. She has also shown herself to be open to communication with everyone involved in the program. It would be hard to overstate the contribution of these two persons to the formation, development, and effectiveness of the program. New patterns have been required and it is fortunate that, as Miss Parker has pointed out, in the Newark School system the principal has considerable autonomy, permitting quick implementation of decisions in the emerging program.

At the outset of the program there was some resentment on the part of the regular staff that no teachers in Cleveland had been chosen for Victoria positions. This was related partly to the possibilities of advancement which might go with being chosen for Victoria. These feelings appear to have subsided almost entirely. It is important to note that the Victoria program has now been so completely merged with the regular program of instruction that on the level of personnel most teachers at Cleveland have difficulty in distinguishing those positions provided under the plan from the others. There is little attempt made to see that Victoria gets the credit in this area, and this wise reserve seems to have contributed to the good relations currently found. The

general feeling is that "Cleveland is a good school which is doing something significant." The interest of the people in the Newark Board of Education, particularly Dr. Campbell, and of the members of the Board of Victoria, especially Mrs. Chubb, has also contributed.

At the present time the general attitude toward the Plan is quite positive both among students and teachers. The former identify Victoria primarily with the trips and programs. The latter range in their opinions from "Victoria has not made much difference as far as I can see. Under Miss Parker we have always had a good innovating school," to "The Victoria Plan has made all the difference in the world. I feel lucky to be in a school where it is in effect." Of the entire teaching group only one individual was basically negative toward the plan, while perhaps one third could be described as highly enthusiastic. The remainder uniformly felt that in many areas real contributions are being made.

The Victoria Program

The strength of the plan lies in the personnel who run it. The people added to the school range from good to outstanding. Both regular and added staff agree that in the long run the effectiveness of the classroom teacher is the most important single factor in the growth of the children, and work toward that end. Several teachers thought originally that the Victoria plan would make their work easier, but they now see that although it has made their work more interesting and diverse, "Victoria has meant more work for us, not less."

When teachers are asked to describe the Victoria plan, they usually mention the class trips first, the special teachers second, the materials

and added resources third, and the special assembly programs last. Rarely were the pre-kindergarten classes or the social workers listed as part of the Victoria Plan. The trips seem to have been mentioned first because they represent a dramatic addition to the school program. Another factor may be that these are the only part of the program uniformly labelled as Victoria, and so come to mind more easily. Even when pressed most teachers maintain that they would list the trips and additional resources for the classroom teachers as the most significant parts of the program. Let us now turn to a discussion of each of these parts.

1. The Class Trips and In-School Assemblies.

Each class made five trips during the year, accompanied by two teachers and a few parents. Teachers report that the trips give the classes and families a common experience both to plan for and to talk and write about for days afterwards. The Plan makes it possible for every child to go. All the evidence argues that these trips are a significant part of the program.

It appears to be a legal requirement that two *regular* teachers accompany each class. This makes a total of ten days absent from class for each teacher in a year. When this is added to the consultations and other programs which withdraw teachers from their normal positions the grounds of some complaints from various teachers becomes apparent. It was suggested that the trips were disruptive of class routines. Any possibility of having a substitute replace the extra teacher should be explored.

The in-school assemblies aimed at cultural enrichment and focused around music, dance, and puppets were spoken of appreciatively by the teachers--particularly since some who had previously been responsible for assemblies could now relax.

2. Victoria Plan Teachers.

The generally high quality and effectiveness of the project teachers were observed under a number of classroom situations and supported by the teachers in the interviews. The opinions on the individual teachers varied widely though few were negative.

Some friction was evident at points. While the general role of the project teachers is clear some additional direction would be profitable on specific points. The question of whether the regular teacher should remain in the room during the project teacher's presentation is a complex one. The released time for preparations and other work is highly prized by some of the regular teachers, while some of the project teachers are just as happy to see the regulars leave. On the other hand several project teachers feel that their services are not fully used since co-ordination of their efforts and those of the regular teachers suffers when the regulars do not know what material is presented. Likewise some of the regular teachers report demonstration classes taught by the project people as very helpful. Another question is where the responsibility lies for initiating efforts at co-ordination of special projects with classes. While some teachers have no difficulties in this area, others tend to assume the first step lies with someone else. Clarification on these two points would be worthwhile. The project

teachers could be reminded that the time they spend outside the classroom has an effect on the morale of the regular teachers and urged to avoid "conspicuous" use of such time.

One difference in the perception of the special teacher's role could be put this way. Victoria people tend to report that their chief job is to reach the teachers, through demonstrations and conferences, with improved ways of carrying on the teaching function. The teachers themselves are more likely to stress the role of Victoria people in reaching the children directly.

Some special attention should be given to the remedial reading teachers. This is a misnomer; reading specialists would be more accurate. The reading program has been one of the strongest sections of the plan. One of the original three teachers has left to head a Title I project at another school. A second teacher, Ruth Habet, during her time with Victoria, has developed a new set of reading materials for first grade. Based on the work of Delacato and revised to suit the special local situation, this set of materials has produced an average vocabulary of 431 words in those students using it. The Scott-Foresman readers, a standard series which give a vocabulary of 389 words in the suburban schools, usually leave the Cleveland students with about 176 words. The new Banks Street Readers, which are designed for city schools, have also been used in another first grade class at Cleveland and have produced less than 257 words.

Despite the loss of one teacher during the year the reading program was considered strong by the regular teachers.

3. Pre-Kindergarten Classes.

Nursery school for children with limited social or cultural backgrounds has been well established as a method of improving school adjustment and performance. The nursery school run under the Victoria Plan is small but has been handled well and imaginatively. One interesting idea was the beginning of each group with three or four children, then slowly adding one child a day for the next two or three weeks. This permitted the first children chosen for social problems to establish secure relations with the small group and teachers before the others were introduced.

The success of even the half year in 1964-65 was shown by the comments of the kindergarten teachers who received the children this year. Clear differences could be identified not only between the pre-kindergarten children and those with no prior experience but also in comparisons with the Head-Start children. The pre-kindergarten children were described as more confident, responsive, attentive, secure, and yet demanding of the teacher's attention and approval.

4. Materials and Supplies

Many teachers commented that the various supplies and devices arranged for by Victoria are of real benefit during the teaching year. However there was no degree of understanding indicated on the question of how much money was available for what supplies or how to go about getting it. Several teachers indicated purchases of materials from their own pockets, even without exploring the possibility of asking for it

through the school. There appears to have been some delay during the past year in getting supplies through the regular channels.

The library has profited from its redecoration and expanded book funds. It is now the showplace of the school. The circulation of its 3,000-odd volumes increased from 7,000 to 13,000 in the last year.

The general facilities and supplies in the Cleveland Elementary School appear adequate. The building itself imposes the most severe restrictions with its multiple floors and quite limited space. There is the usual group of study materials adapted more to suburbia than a depressed area and it is imperative that as materials such as the Bank Street Readers or Miss Mabot's reader become available they should be adopted.

The main limitations in this area are outside of Victoria auspices: too few teachers for the pupils and too little space to teach them in.

5. Social Work.

Evaluation of the social work program poses problems which cannot be overcome in a direct manner. Eysenck speaking of psychotherapy, one of the included services under the Victoria program, points out that despite seventy years of practice, hundreds of thousands of patients, and thousands of experiments, there is currently no good evidence on the effects of therapy either pro or con. Something of the same situation applies to social work. Both the criteria and the data are too private to permit ready examination.

The approach that is usually used is one of face validity. If we place competent personnel in positions where they are doing what they have been trained to do, and if they feel they are accomplishing something, then we feel that the program is satisfactory.

In the case of the social work at Cleveland these criteria are met on the whole, but even at this level of evaluation there is considerable evidence of possible improvement.

The problems which have arisen in this aspect of the program seem to be due to a misunderstanding of roles which is almost tragic in its dimensions. Prior to the establishment of the Victoria Plan, Mrs. Gilmartin, now the coordinator of the social work program, had worked at Cleveland two days each week as a social worker. Both she and Miss parker testify to the happy and fruitful relationships and performances of that period. Communication was open, frequent, and informal. Much case work got done.

With the establishment of the plan and the addition of other social workers, Mrs. Gilmartin was designated as coordinator of the Social Work program, but the responsibilities and prerogatives of that office were not spelled out. Mrs. Gilmartin reports that she felt quite pressed, by the sheer presence of the additional workers, to do the intake and casefinding work which could be assigned to the new workers as well as to supervise in general the work of the whole program. The new social workers, however, did not really see her as supervisor in that sense, which made for some difficulties. The workers from agencies such as the Youth Development Clinic feel that their primary position is

within their own agency and only secondarily in the school and the plan. Three chains of command make a complicated situation.

Miss Parker assumed that the social work program would be coordinated as a part of the program in Cleveland School, so that the whole operation should come under her general supervision and should constantly feed certain kinds of information to her. Mrs. Gilmartin and her staff on the other hand tend to think of social work as a professional specialty which requires a certain autonomy and respect, and which should only be reviewed by fellow-professionals. The social workers suggest that it might be better if the social work center were outside the school in a nearby location, while one has said that she can see no advantage in the school relationship for the social workers or for the children.

The result has been a series of regrettable misunderstandings and tensions between Mrs. Gilmartin and the school administration. The administration feels that it has lost, to some degree, the admirable services of Mrs. Gilmartin as a social worker and that there is now very little feedback of information from social work to administration and to teachers. The teachers mostly agree that the social work staff does not contribute much to their understanding of the children's problems. The problem of initiative in feedback is present, but if the teachers approach the workers they often receive information of the type desired. The social workers on their side feel somewhat pushed and challenged by the administration and have reacted to this with some defensiveness, especially on the part of their coordinator.

Mrs. Gilmartin also feels that the teachers have been slow about referring problems to the social workers, "Teachers tend to hide their problem children, very much as parents do," -- and that this slowness has made her position more difficult.

It is for these reasons that we refer to the present social work situation as tragic. All of the people involved are well-trained and highly motivated, but the differences in understanding of the various roles and responsibilities has led to some defensiveness, suspicion, concealment, and hostility which have mutually strengthened each other. There seems little real reason why some changes and clarifications could not be made which would solve these problems.

Formalization of the role of the coordinator and the methods for and types of feedback which may be expected by the administration and teachers would be a first step.

It is apparent, however, that there may well be a real divergence in the interests of the social workers and the school as a whole. The final commitment of social workers is, in one sense, to the individual child and sometimes his family, while that of the school, both teacher and administration, must be at least partially to the whole group of children and the institution. While displays of aggression may and often do further the ultimate development of a passive personality they may also disrupt the work of thirty other children. Self-actualization and socialization are not congruent concepts.

It seems advisable to stress more strongly to the social workers their role in the institutional framework and the effect of their comparative autonomy in hours and work on the school as a whole. The school staff, on

the other hand, should be reminded that the social workers are not miracle workers and are not in the school primarily to remove problem cases from the teachers' hands.

It is probably easier to educate the social workers than the regular staff, both because of the numbers involved and the nature of the needed orientation. While the consultations and workshops which have been held are a step in the correct direction, the process of reorientation involved, in considering the child as a full person in a given cultural setting rather than as a student in a classroom, is a long term proposition.

Despite current problems the social work program was acknowledged as useful and necessary by all the school staff. Several teachers commented that it was a wonderful thing to be able to send a disturbed or disturbing child down to the social workers, and that such children often returned in a much improved frame of mind. As one teacher remarked, "Thank God she was there! I am in a different state when they come back too. Just for this alone they are helpful."

Concluding Comments

One comment that was heard from the teachers with a fair degree of regularity was that discipline at Cleveland is poor. It is quite possible that the Victoria Plan has lowered the precision with which the school can be run as a result of the freedom the youngsters experienced on the field trips and may have carried back to the classrooms. The number of children in the halls has increased with the special projects, use of the library,

trips to remedial classes and social workers. The number of substitutes involved in the Victoria Plan also will contribute to poor overall discipline. Combining these factors with a student population which is heavily weighted with problem children, it is easy to understand why many of the teachers would feel concerned.

The members of this research team agree in feeling that no problem of an unusual nature exists in this area. The children were generally under control and evidenced little disorder, particularly at the lower grade levels. It is suggested that such discipline breakdown as may have occurred is all to the good in that it indicates more permissiveness and expression being granted to the children.

A real problem was created for the school and the plan by the departure of the language arts teacher and one of the reading specialists. The Department of Personnel did not replace them during the remainder of the year. While their problem is understandable, any reasonable method which would hasten replacements to the Victoria plan would be justified since one function of the project at this time seems to be as a model for other attempts. While Miss Parker does not feel in a position to suggest freezing the current people to their jobs, since this might operate to their disadvantage, some method of replacement is indicated to offset losses during the year.

As the various aspects of the program at Cleveland school have been examined, one feeling which has been repeatedly expressed is that the Plan is "over the hump." The difficult initial phases have been worked out,

experience has been gained, salaries are rising, a small personnel turnover is expected, early jealousies have disappeared, and the social work situation is being worked on. During the next years the effectiveness of the program should expand on this base.

The foundation for the Victoria Plan has been carefully laid in the last year and one half. The personnel and programs are well chosen and have been integrated into the Cleveland Elementary School almost completely. As it stands the plan is an unusually well-worked-out approach to the problem of the school in the deprived areas of the central city. The question of whether this approach justifies the substantial investment in it remains to be settled.